



HOUSING ALLIANCE

June 11, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 2001 and the -16 amendments, which seeks to increase housing options and housing opportunity in communities across Oregon.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including non-profit housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Today, most households in Oregon are one or two person households, which includes older families whose children have moved away, younger households just starting out, and seniors in retirement. In addition, today we have a mismatch between incomes and housing costs for too many Oregonians. Providing smaller housing types may also provide more affordable options for people in our communities – teachers, firefighters, nurses, and others – who today struggle to find a place they can afford to rent or buy.

Historically, single family zoning has been used to discriminate against people of color and people with lower incomes who may need to rent a home. Zoning laws were historically used as a tool to create communities for higher income people, which neither renters nor people of color could afford.

We believe we need to try a range of strategies to solve the problems our communities are facing. HB 2001 with the -16 amendments seeks to require communities to allow for more needed housing options, and to address the need for housing for people with moderate incomes and smaller family sizes by requiring communities above a certain size to allow other housing types, which might encourage the development of smaller and less expensive houses.

By allowing duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes and cottage clusters, it would allow developers to respond to a demand within the market for smaller sized, and potentially more affordable housing types, without requiring subdivision of lots. Currently, these housing types are not necessarily allowed in all residential areas in some communities in Oregon, and as a consequence, can be more difficult to build in those communities.

For developers of affordable homeownership options, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes and cottage clusters are an exciting option, but are extremely difficult to build because of current zoning laws. If these housing types are not allowed, developers must go through a lengthy and expensive process to divide the lot, and also face regulations which have the impact of preventing housing types other than single family homes.

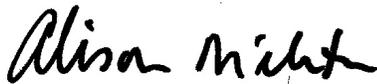
Increasing the number of homes which can be built per lot, subject to reasonable restrictions allowed under HB 2001, may over time either help to decrease the cost per home or offer options which are better aligned with current needs based on household size. Per the Office of Economic Analysis:

...If a community were to allow for more units to be built on a given parcel of land, then better affordability can be achieved, and future growth more efficiently accommodated. This is for at least two reasons. First, one would be dividing high land costs over a larger number of units which both lowers cost per unit and increases supply relative to existing zoning. Second, each unit will be smaller than under current zoning, which also lowers the cost per unit.¹

We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has significant benefits. Kids are able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – instead of worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

¹ “Reconsidering Single Family Zoning” Office of Economic Analysis, December 12, 2018
<https://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2018/12/12/reconsidering-single-family-zoning/>